

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
(MINUTES ADOPTED 2/14/05)**

**PRESENTATIONS, PUBLIC HEARING, SPECIAL SESSION & WORKSESSION
OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Monday, May 3, 2004

Closed Session 4/26/04 - Moved by Mizeur; seconded by Seamens. The Council voted unanimously to convene in Closed Session at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference Room of the Municipal Building (VOTING FOR: Porter, Mizeur, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich). OFFICIALS PRESENT DURING DISCUSSION: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Mizeur, Seamens, Williams; STAFF/OTHERS PRESENT: Waters, Hampton, Jim Mercer (by conference call). The Council discussed candidates for the City Manager position. Information reviewed included candidates' resumes and written responses to questions posed in the application process, the citizens City Manager Selection Committee recommendations, and the Mercer Group matrix of semi-finalist candidates. The Council reached a decision about the candidates to interview in the final selection process. (Authority: Annotated Code of Maryland, State Government Article, Section 10-508(a)(1)(i)).

OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Mayor Porter	City Manager Finn
Councilmember Austin-Lane	Assistant City Clerk Carpenter
Councilmember Barry	ECD Director Daines
Councilmember Elrich	Community Development Specialist Thompson
Councilmember Mizeur	Senior Planner Inerfeld
Councilmember Seamens	
Councilmember Williams	

The Council convened at 7:37 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bobbi Kittner reported that she represented the City at a luncheon held by Maryland Main Street Program. The City has been awarded this designation by the State. It was one of 16 cities. She wants to thank the community, City staff, Council and businesses. A wealth of expertise and knowledge will be made available. She formally invited Ms. Porter to the Old Town Business Association (OTBA) silent auction where she will be presented with the plaque. She read from the brochure.

Mayor Porter replied that they all deserve the credit for all the hard work done.

Councilmember Austin-Lane apologized for the absence of the Council being represented at the meeting on Friday. She looked forward to improved communications. She thanked him for representing us.

Jane Lawrence, Takoma Avenue congratulated the City. She asked a number of questions about the stormwater fund, only some of them were answered in the proposed budget. We know residents may not be aware – her concern is not to comment on quality, due diligence, etc., but desire to focus on the need for greater transparency. The Council talked about borrowing from the fund. There was a surplus. Now that the surplus has been exhausted, the Council is not borrowing from the fund. The Council is incurring additional debt to finance this project. Why not say we are planning to borrow more funds? The stormwater board will incur more debt. City residents will repay the debt for a number of years through fees. She asked that the Council clearly describe how the city will meet the shortfall through the stormwater fund. A few more questions were posed. If the stormwater board will direct borrowing from the fund borrow, when would that vote occur, how much notice will there be of rates, how will residents receive the notice, and what capital improvements by Public Works will be delayed to finance this additional debt?

Councilmember Williams acknowledged the accurate portrayal of the situation. The city would be borrowing money to do this. That is a difference between what we did in the past, from borrowing from the fund to borrowing to put money into the fund to make the transfer. This proposal would be to address paying for stormwater capital projects with stormwater money.

Ms. Lawrence repeated that the money to finance parts of the community center construction would be to pay for stormwater projects related to the community center.

Ms. Porter confirmed the remedy we are undertaking is a result of the construction.

Ms. Lawrence inquired, absent the construction, that this would not have been a stormwater project of the City. Where is that money in the stormwater fund? When that \$240,000 goes to \$400,000, then there is a deficit. In plain English, what are we doing?

Nellie Moxley asked, on the same subject, whether there is someone in charge of stormwater and oversight of the fees.

City Manager said that the Director of Public Works is in charge.

Ms. Moxley added that before paying salaries with our fees, the monies should be strictly used for stormwater since we have no engineer right now.

Ms. Porter clarified we are using a consulting engineer. We have used the services of a firm when we have needed to.

Ms. Moxley continued there should be some money available (i.e., Montgomery County and

WSSC).

Ms. Porter said the County contributed \$350,000 to the project.

Ms. Moxley asked about the amount we still owe.

Ms. Porter explained that the original cost was about \$750,000. There was some money from the County. In the budget there is a proposal to borrow from the stormwater fund.

Mr. Williams said we still do not have a final number.

Ms. Moxley asked how much will be put on (per person, per house, and how many years).

Mr. Williams replied that the fee is not proposed to change.

Ms. Porter said there will be a formal budget hearing next week.

Richard Margolius, Garland Avenue said he is here to talk about the tool library and that he wants the Council to consider funding it in FY05. Fifty people have committed to being Friends of the Tool Library, and 12 have committed to being on a board. We have been hesitant to push it forward because we heard it might be cut. We surveyed interest in support; it was evident that people want to support it. They have not collected money, and will not until City is committed to keeping it.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Councilmember Williams' Update on the Community Center Construction Project.

Mr. Williams reported that the concrete slab has been poured on the second floor (this floor).

(Councilmember Elrich arrived at 7:56 p.m.)

Mr. Williams continued, he will bring information on the change orders as soon as possible. We need that to know how much money we will need to complete the project.

Ms. Porter noted that she attended a meeting last of the County Council committee that recommends items to the County Council. They considered the remaining \$750,000 and the project was voted out of committee (3-0). Next it will be considered by the County Council. We are \$200,000 short from the State. She explained that she told them the Council was committed to completing the project, and has asked staff to draft a letter telling them we are committed to completing the building, along with taking \$200,000 out of our operating funds.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked about the stormwater component.

Ms. Porter clarified that the money from the city's operating budget would be for the building itself. This is the money we did not get from the State. There is a proposal to take \$200,000 out of operating funds.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked what is being expressed to the county (i.e., the \$200,000 is in the proposed budget).

Ms. Porter replied in the affirmative.

Councilmember Elrich said this may not be the end of the change orders. We still may not have enough funds for the project.

Mr. Williams agreed. We may need some kind of contingency.

Councilmember Seamens expressed concern with the change orders. Last week, we decided to commit money for the interior. We were not aware that Mr. Williams had information about the magnitude of the change orders. We need as much information as possible. He would hope that in future more information would be shared.

Mr. Williams apologized--the failure was due to family issues.

Mr. Seamens commented that we looked at a low contingency of 5% in the past. In the future, we should look at our experience as we now realize it is much higher than 5%. We were overly optimistic before and should be more conservative in the future.

2. Overview of Proposed FY05 Budget

City Manager Finn gave the presentation. He will provide color copies of the charts to Council.

The presentation was given in sections:

1 - FY04 Revenues: \$14,016,340. Mr. Finn described the sources of revenues.

2 - FY05 Revenues: \$14,883,186 (6.2 percent increase).

The numbers include a growth in local taxes. Taxes to remain at \$0.66. County funds are an important addition and include a Police Rebate.

3 - Shows an increase.

Mr. Elrich said he would like a breakdown of the county funds and how they correspond with departments.

Mr. Finn pointed out that he is reducing the recommended carry over to \$667,000. At this point,

we do not want to rely too heavily on that carryover.

4 - Operating budget (\$14,016,340). The personnel cost, \$9,556,493 makes up a substantial portion of the total. At the end of June, the FY04 budget is finalized.

5 - FY05 6.2% increase. The personnel and departmental operating cost is only 2%. Non-departmental is up significantly. We recommend a transfer of City funds to the Community Center, and a contribution to the Equipment Replacement Reserve. These fund transfers and the Non-Departmental costs are the source of the greatest increases.

6 - Comparison from '94 to '05. Personnel costs are going up 2 percent; a 2.5 % pay increase for employees. Many of the departmental budgets have stayed the same or gone down.

7 - FY05 Budget. It is broken out in different ways. Personnel is green, operating is white. Purple is total.

8 - Salaries are broken out by year. It is not a very significant dollar increase. There is a decrease in overtime and holiday. Promotions and allowances increase. We looked more closely at shift differentials.

9 - Personnel benefits (compared '04 and '05). He complimented staff (particularly, Deputy Manager Hobbes) for the tough negotiations and decisions made with the Union. Retirement costs are going up. Workers compensation is down--thanks to staff.

10 - Full Time Equivalents (FT's). We identify the number of full time equivalent positions. The interesting numbers are on slide #11. We looked at '96 to present. There is a variance of 2 and 3 positions up-and-down. The number of employees has pretty much stayed the same.

Councilmember Elrich asked whether it reflect community center changes.

Mr. Finn replied in the affirmative. The number reflects anticipated activities beginning January 2005.

Mr. Elrich asked about the estimates for 2006. What will we see a year from now?

Mr. Finn said that staff will get into detail when we look at the recreation budget. A lot of costs will be related to teaching classes. There will be only one full-time position in the new community center. We have merged the two positions--that person, running and overseeing the learning center. That number is built into the projections.

Mr. Elrich asked about the new Public Works position.

Mr. Finn said it is included in the budget.

12 - Property tax vs. General Fund Revenues (FY95 - FY04). For the most part, the city's budget has been less dependent on property tax, and more on other sources of revenue.

Mr. Seamens asked if it was showing a percentage.

13 - Real property tax assessment base. It will continue to grow based on reassessments. That is a healthy sign.

14 - Property tax rate (history since 1998). In 1998, it increased to \$0.61.6, in 1999 it increased to \$0.64.2, and then to \$0.66. The difference was exclusively to pay for community center debt service (the later increase). When we made that decision, the State and County began to take us more seriously.

Mr. Finn finished his slide presentation. He noted that staff sent out copies of the budget to the Council. It is available on the web and copies are now available on request. The 2005 fiscal budget looked at the City priorities. We developed departmental budgets based on the priorities. There were seven priorities: communications, fiscal management, public safety, community center, continuation of economic development, infrastructure, and affordable housing.

Mr. Seamens said the emphasis on gun law enforcement is not mentioned.

Mr. Finn said it was just a summary.

Mr. Finn went into the departmental budgets, noting that \$100,000 was allocated to the Equipment Replacement Reserve (ERR). Nothing was in the FY04 Budget for the ERR.

In the budget packet, staff has spent a significant amount of time on service levels. We have noted service levels in this budget, as compared to FY04. That provides the Council with more information about what makes up the numbers. Council can discuss costs but with more respect to possible areas to eliminate, reduce and increase. The need information is now available.

The street resurfacing program will continue at \$500,000. These funds can be used for resurfacing or for debt service. The library and recreation shared position was initiated by staff. He commended this approach for the Learning Center.

The budget contains an additional \$200,000 for the community center, and we have budgeted for 6 months of community center operations. It does not include funds for the tool library. Council was going to reconsider the tool library. It is funded as an interim item at this time. It does include 2.5% for union and nonunion salary increases. He noted that he included \$100,000 for potential litigation (Washington Adventist Hospital), suggesting that the Council can reallocate these funds if they are not needed for the identified purpose.

Ms. Austin-Lane noted several people have asked if we can freeze City employees' salaries.

Mr. Finn responded that collective bargaining agreement has agreed on 2.5%. We pay employees the calculated market adjustment or 2.5% as a minimum.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked whether it is ever done as a one time thing. Can it be done for a single year?

Mr. Elrich observed that we have never reneged on a contract.

Mr. Finn recalled that the County delayed an increase, but paid a price in deteriorated employee relations.

Mr. Finn remarked on the subject of the stormwater fund (2005 - \$234,437 dollars). This includes the annual allotment for the storm sewer cleaning of \$60,000. We break the City up into sectors. There is \$70,000 included for stormwater improvement projects. Some money is to be spent on Maple Avenue before it is repaved (close to the DC line). That is approximately the same amount as each year. It is consistent with the past. The proposed budget includes an amount of \$49,540, as the first payment on the potential borrowing of \$2.6 million (9 years term). We have used only \$10,000 to balance the budget. We still have \$48,000 of uncommitted surplus in that account. That is how we accumulated the \$200,000. The fee would stay the same. A \$50,000 contingency should be sufficient.

Ms. Porter clarified that Mr. Finn is proposing to use the surplus for the community center and to borrow \$400,000, by committing future surpluses to make loan payments on a bond issuance.

Mr. Finn noted that in the current, approved budget, Council has not taken action to move the \$200,000. That budget amendment will come to the Council in the next few weeks. For the next few years, the fee should be able to remain the same, unless the City changes policy.

Ms. Porter questioned what we have been spending out of the capital fund in the past for stormwater.

Mr. Seamens said the \$200,000 was shown on Mr. Williams' sheet as revenues. It was not allocated to the community center project as of yet.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked about the duplicate stormwater bills that some people received.

Mr. Finn said there was a problem with the machine, and they were sent out twice.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked how much postage did this cost. How much staff time was involved?

Mr. Finn said he did not have that information. The significant staff time was involved in answering phone complaints and questions.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked if we are sending out refunds and questioned the number of

incorrect/duplicate billings.

Councilmember Barry asked about the theory behind the stormwater fund. What is the basis for the \$28 fee? Can it be reduced in the future?

Mr. Finn explained that it was once part of the general property tax, but was changed to a fee base--based on the amount of land and/or impervious surface in some situations. It is calculated by the square foot. The \$28.68 is a residential amount. Commercial or non-profit property owners pay by the square foot of impervious area. To allow us to maintain the storm sewers, the cleaning of them, there are funds for special projects (drainage tile put in) which we try to coordinate this with street projects, and the last component is half of the engineer's salary and some clerical staff time. The engineer spends a significant amount of time on stormwater. The cost of labor and material will determine when the fee has to go up.

Mr. Williams added it could go up because of State and Federal regulations. He remarked about a presentation last Fall by the Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee of the Council of Governments.

Mr. Seamens asked what percentage of the drains are cleaned.

Mr. Finn responded that about a third of the total area cleaned each year.

He continued with remarks about the Community Center Budget. It includes \$200,000 out of the general budget and the recommended \$400,000 borrowed against stormwater. We have \$5,319,157 remaining. We keep paying bills so the overall number continues to change. The Special Revenue Budget includes Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Program Open Space monies.

Ms. Mizeur commented on the community center budget. Shouldn't this number be higher to cover change order costs?

Mr. Finn responded that we have put in what we know right now. Council will discuss the community center next week, and there will be an update. We are working to get exact numbers. We hope to sort through this next week. Soon we will talk about the main level. We will need to design it and get it ready for a bid. We will need to go through permit process.

Ms. Mizeur asserted that the budget should include some projection of the community center costs (e.g., if it is another \$500,000 or \$1,000,000). Then what appears to be a balanced budget is not a balanced budget. What use is all of this?

Mr. Finn said that with the \$400,000 and the additional \$200,000, included in the budget we are off about a half million.

Ms. Mizeur concluded the additional money will go to these future costs, not costs we have

already incurred. How confident will you be about the numbers at the end of May? The document has been presented as if everything is okay. Are we going to have a point where we will have to make those tough decisions?

Mr. Williams said, if the police rebate had not come in, this would be a different budget.

Mr. Finn agreed. It would have been very different until we heard the money was restored. He would not have recommended funding a number of items.

Mr. Elrich asked can we look at some of the “frozen” items. Are there some of them that we could survive the year without having, to increase the contingency. He would like to see the results of the exercise.

Mr. Finn said there were two positions: (1) a freeze on one police officer position, and (2) a vacancy in Public Works.

Ms. Porter questioned the position in Public Works.

Mr. Finn replied that it is a position in sanitation. We would move someone from streets to sanitation. No one would lose their job.

Ms. Porter said that we really do not want to lose personnel from either streets or police.

Mr. Seamens said he agreed with Mr. Elrich’s suggestion. We know that some things like the tool library need to be restored.

Ms. Mizeur wished continued discussions as we have on service levels.

Mr. Barry reminded we also have the decision on fixing the roads.

Ms. Porter said there is a budget public hearing next Monday. We will have the first of our budget Worksessions this Thursday. We will finish looking at service cuts on Thursday.

PUBLIC HEARING

3. Final Concept Plan - Old Town Parking Garage

Senior Planner Inerfeld gave a presentation on the planning for the garage. The purpose of the public hearing and the worksession is to get input on the design. He met with the Historic Preservation Commission, and M-NCPPC (Park and Planning) and will come back to Council later to talk about the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Then we will talk more about revenue numbers that the Council has requested.

Mr. Inerfeld noted John Urciolo has been to many meetings. He has talked about both the garage and a new commercial building. The two of them are going through the development review process together. However, we are just talking about the garage tonight.

There was a Community Forum on April 21st.

John Urciolo showed a “bare bones” model of what the garage would look like—three levels with 28 spaces on each level. Both the existing lot and garage would be operated as a municipal facility. We are not very far along on the conceptual design. The facade is very unfinished at this point.

We heard that residents wanted some design articulation that linked it to the existing community.

Mr. Elrich asked whether it is possible to get information on how many square feet is the proposed building. What is the parking need for the new building? It doesn't make sense to separate out the two developments.

Mr. Inerfeld clarified that there are 29,000 square feet in the new commercial structure. The parking requirement is 80 spaces. All of the commercial property is in the commercial overlay zone. The County is flexible because of this (Rockville compared to Takoma Park). Old Town Takoma Park is more like the District than suburban Montgomery County.

Mr. Elrich concluded that this starts with saying there is a parking deficit, and we are talking about adding the same number of spaces needed for the new building. We need to know the impact and whether this garage will address the current deficit.

Ms. Austin-Lane said that we have reached out to organizations. What is known about discussions with the District?

Mr. Inerfeld said we have reached out, but have not heard much from them. They are interested in talking. We have also called Strayer University, Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Washington Theological Union, and the opera building, to get a sense of the parking demand. We notified them about the community forum.

Ms. Austin-Lane summed that we are still assessing the number of spaces needed. What other areas have we looked at designs in?

Mr. Inerfeld said we have more work to do.

Mr. Seamens remarked that staff should contact Adrian Fenty and seek his help in outreach to the community.

Mr. Inerfeld responded that staff tried. We need to do more.

- Public Hearing:

Robert Ginsburg, 7129 Maple Avenue said he was on the Old Town Project Committee in 1984. It was unique to combine private development with community development and government. He argued then that there be public parking. Mr. Urciolo did a fine job in making that a public access parking area. Everyone wants to park there. It is a sign that parking is needed. In the old days, people said you do not want to bring cars to Takoma Park. We want parking for Takoma Park residents too. Not just for other people. The design of the garage (a Takoma Park feature) needs to be in the right style and right flavor. He recalled when the gazebo was put up. People complained. In these aesthetic matters there are differences. As we advance on this project, we should do so with transparency, clarity, openness, and timeliness. Who is going to pay for this or that? As things change, please inform the public. Do not allow the project to be whittled away unwittingly. There is a strong public interest. Do not let us be surprised.

Sabrina Baron, Historic Takoma reported that John and Rob spoke with Historic Takoma. We testified to Montgomery County. We are dedicated to the Old Town district. We look forward to working with OTBA. The garage has good potential to contribute to business vitality. The City can do something very sensitive with design and something exciting with the facade. There is a lot of opportunity to be in harmony with art deco or earlier architecture. The garage could be set back further. There can be a good transition from commercial to residential.

Bruce Moyer - Westmoreland Area Community Association (WACO) (Submitted a written statement). This project lies in Ward 3, adjacent to the Old Town Business Association (OTBA). We have a special interest. The business district lies on the edge of our neighborhood. We are fortunate to have the ease of access by foot. We realize they need to reach a larger market, who come by car. We are already witnessing constraints of parking. Our residents are vying with shoppers for parking spaces. Many of us do not have driveways. We support in principal the design which would enhance the development, provide parking and be financially viable. It should be a win-win arrangement. At our March meeting, we received a briefing. We agreed to support the project but have five concerns: (1) Adequate stormwater maintenance for the facility, that will stop the current stormwater runoff which enters the yards of nearby homeowners. Steve Halpren validated our concerns. (2) There is the "Goldilocks approach" which seems reasonable as designed (not too big, not too small). WACO would be concerned about a larger structure. (3) With respect to design, we favor a design harmonious with existing structures. (4) Safety is

critical. (5) He applauded Mr. Urciolo and staff for their openness and helpfulness. He urged that the dialogue continue. Their position of support extends only to the parking facility. They look forward to commenting on the commercial facility.

Bob Guldin, Willow Avenue said he was speaking for himself, not as Newsletter editor. He is a member of OTBA. He said he lives, walks and works in the area. He is skeptical of the need for the garage, or as much parking as has been discussed. No one has ever said let's not go there; parking is terrible. It is rare to say that. The parking that is available is not as accessible as it should be. In the lot behind the Post Office, there is a large area for employees and a small area for shoppers. The employee spaces are frequently vacant. It is not being made available to the customers. There is also the lot behind Mark's Kitchen and the lot behind the bank. He said that if the City agrees to build a structure, we should make it look good. Let's not have it rise above the two stories.

Sam Kittner voiced his support for the parking garage. Not only do we live in the old town area, but we have office space there. There is a lack of parking that affects business and services. We need parking for customers, employees, and proprietors. We have a lot of traffic that drives through the town but does not stop because there is no place to park. The garage as proposed is a wonderful location. It should be designed in an aesthetically pleasing way. There is no doubt that for the economic vitality, we need a parking garage. Think about how you get to places, and how you park. Even though there has been talk that the garage will only serve the businesses there, the location will serve the entire Old Takoma business area.

Penny Jones Sapier, Takoma DC said she live one block from the parking garage. She has not heard anyone speak about how badly this garage is needed in the City. On any given day the streets are parked to the maximum capacity. On Saturday, forget about finding parking. She has heard a lot about the garage and has attended conversations with OTBA. She wholeheartedly supported this effort. It will also help Takoma DC and help alleviate the parking stress.

Catherine Tunis, Chair, Council on the Environment said she is concerned that this is a large house lot which is pervious and feeds the groundwater, and this project would nearly completely take over that area. No stormwater would be seeping in anymore. Stormwater management is not nearly shunting off water to the stream. It is water seeping into groundwater, slowly moving to the stream. This project will further damage the watershed. There are ways to mitigate this effect, but it is hard to see any of the mitigation techniques used on this lot. She would like to see the plan modified to include stormwater mitigation.

Nellie Moxley remarked that previous speakers were correct with respect with comments about retention and prevention of soil capacity. Follow through on residents' recommendations. The District will not respond until they get letters from the Council.

Lorraine Pearsall, Vice President, Historic Takoma commented on the design issues, expressing appreciation for staff recommendations. She suggested to incorporate a small retail space in the

front of the garage, but noting that they have a concern about how far in front of the house the garage will be located. Maybe we should think about pushing the setback instead. The other design issues include pulling the base forward using columns. She does not think putting huge pillars there is a good idea.

Ms. Tunis said she had concerns about the garage. She does not have a problem with parking because she does a great deal of walking. There are differences of opinions. She urged the Council to look carefully at the financing and at the arrangements for the City's involvement. There are citizens who are concerned.

Ms. Porter said we will not go forward until we get answers to those questions.

Lorraine Pearsall asked about the property being bought opposite the funeral parlor. What impact will that have on this development? Will there be parking as part of this? There is a need to coordinate the two.

The Public Hearing was closed at 9:45.

SPECIAL SESSION

4. Resolution re: Recognition (Travis Price).

Ms. Austin-Lane expressed that she was pleased that other business people were present. Travis has completed a new home in Rock Creek Park and has relocated his office to Georgetown. He has a great vision for his craft and has worked hard with others to be innovative. As an architect, teacher, and mentor he has offered much to many.

Moved by Ms. Austin-Lane; seconded by Mr. Elrich.

Ms. Porter seconded Joy's words of thank and recognized the contributions.

Mr. Elrich said he has known Travis for 25 years, remarking about the great work he has done.

Travis Price said he met Mr. Elrich and John Urciolo years ago, when he was first beginning to talk about revitalizing old town. Tonight's recognition is a pleasant surprise. He thanked the Council.

Resolution #2004-16 was adopted unanimously (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Mizeur, Seamens, Williams).

RESOLUTION #2004-16 (Attached)

There was a formal presentation.

BREAK - The Council adjourned for a scheduled break at 9:52 and later reconvened at 10:04 p.m..

WORKSESSION

5. Parking Issues (Old Town & Takoma Junction)

Dan Robinson, OTBA (Sligo Computer Services) said that it was 20 years ago when a friend who owned an Austin Healy brought it to Takoma Park for repairs. There were no parking issues at that time. Why is parking important? What is the demand for parking? Is there a parking plan? What are OTBA's priorities and the background? There are adequate parking facilities to access downtown Takoma, development of new business. These keep current business flourishing and attracting customers, serving visitor needs as well as community needs. Residents hope to hear from the Council about its concerns and are willing to bring back comments to the parking committee of OTBA.

Mr. Elrich said that originally we were just talking about a parking garage on the Urciolo lot. Now we are discussing building both a building and a garage.

Dan Robinson said the Main Street proposal was accepted in Maryland and that he hopes it will be accepted in the District, as well. He thought the number of spaces we need is open to discussion; the future will see more business and residents. The County and District zoning requirements vary greatly, as do main street guidelines and prior methodologies. We have County overlay zone flexibility, including waivers. There are parking pressures 7 days a week. New and exiting meter hour recommendations are being made. They are looking at employee stickers, creative use of unused spots and residential permit flexibility—many things are being explored. A seven-day use survey is being conducted. He wants a City policy on employee parking to be more coherent. He wants clarification of the enforcement issues—either City enforcement or County enforcement. He suggested the Main street approach. What are our priorities? He supported the garage as a coherent plan and effective use of space—a residential permit adjustment until the garage is built might be helpful (e.g., get buy-in from residents, for test if need be).

Mr. Elrich said that if the goal is to provide adequate parking, getting a variance from the required number of parking spaces does not solve the problem.

Mr. Robinson responded that in Takoma Junction, a restaurant wanted to open but could not because of the lack of adequate parking. He agreed that a variance does not make more parking, but that parking may exist elsewhere which could count.

Ms. Austin-Lane commended the efforts, encouraging interested parties to continue to forward suggestions to the Council. The budget discussion may be an appropriate time to look at the enforcement issue. Her understanding is that the restaurant cannot go forward without parking.

Ms. Porter found the presentation very helpful. She would like a copy of it in writing. She found the notion of an overall parking plan as an excellent idea. Meters, flexibility, etc., are all good suggestions. In terms of someone who lives on the other side of the City, she has thought of going to a different dry cleaner because it is so hard to get to the one in Old Town. It is not within walking distance. On non-commuting hours, the focus should be on getting more people from the other side of the City.

Mr. Williams said when there was an expansion of residential parking on Pine Avenue, residents indicated a willingness to be flexible for business customers to park in the residential zone. They did not want to consider themselves in a vacuum. They wanted it as part of a wider discussion. He said willingness was there for flexibility in business use and a residential zone during business hours.

Mr. Seamens said, with respect to OTBA, that he sees this as an example of what we can expect to see in the future. It was approached in an analytical way, with refined requests to the Council. He looks forward to seeing other examples of this in the downtown area.

Mr. Elrich said a lot of the proposals are useful. The Council supported a waiver request for a restaurant which also had the support of neighbors. These are good creative ways. He indicated objections to calling a private lot a municipal lot. A lot of the other ideas are good.

8. Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

This segment is presented by Ivy Thompson (Community Development Specialist) and Bruce Baker (Chair of Community Advisory Committee).

Ms. Thompson introduced herself as the staff liaison for the Citizens Advisory Committee. They are seeking Council's input to our outreach plan to solicit more proposals from Takoma Park organizations and to encourage more public participation on the CAC.

Bruce Baker reported that the committee is on track, a good start for this year's process. We have expanded our membership. We have 7 members (last year there were only 4). Five of the six Wards are represented. Several committee members are on the board of the Takoma Foundation. They are doing their spring grant cycle. Some of that energy will be available to the CAC. We will have the opportunity to get better proposals. Our outreach plan is another step we are taking.

Ms. Porter asked about that process.

Mr. Baker said they will expand the list of contacts, noting that members are getting an education in the process of CDBG programming. We will make a lot of contacts in May and June. He will write a personal letter, and the CAC will encourage citizens associations and local groups to participate.

Ms. Mizeur asked whether he can provide a list of those who the CAC has reached out to. The CCI, (community health clinic in the Crossroads) would be a good candidate.

Mr. Baker asserted that the Council is also part of the outreach effort.

Ms. Porter asked if the requested list could be sent to everyone on the Council.

Mr. Barry said a lot of money has gone for street enhancement projects.

Mr. Baker said we have had problems understanding our prerogative. Fifteen percent of funds were reserved for services. We have less discretion on how the “bricks and mortars” funds are awarded. In the last three years, the community center has been the recipient of the CDBG monies. We have to defer to the City’s wisdom on that point.

Mr. Finn said that in recent years, we have shifted money into street projects and moved street money into the community center. When we complete the current phase (estimated January 2005), it is still better and easier to move to streets, and move that money back to the community center. He recommended that we continue to use the majority of available funds for the community center.

Ms. Porter said that in Prince George’s County, the County held money and has distributed it under a completely different process.

Mr. Seamens asked whether the CAC can you take on new members.

Mr. Baker said they are open to anyone interested in participation. They have held meetings to create the outreach plan. Members need to be on board by the beginning of September to vote on projects.

Ms. Porter said that the Council will vote on a resolution next week. She thanked Ms. Thompson for her work.

7. Gateway / Wayfinder System Project.

Terry Healy (Gallagher & Assoc) remarked that he lives on Allegheny Avenue.

Mr. Inerfeld spoke on gateway signs as a good first impression to enhance the image of the city, to attract customers, and to help visitors and residents find destinations in the community.

With respect to the scope of services, he commented on data collection--what signage exists now and what is needed. He remarked about the destinations to point-out with the signage. Each sign can only have three destinations on it. More hinder the user from immediate recognition.

Mr. Healy said the domain is within the boundaries of the City. The goal is to enhance the

boundaries and to take in other business districts that surround the City. There will be meetings with staff, Council, residents, businesses, etc. We are working to come up with a wayfinding system after priorities are set. Both pedestrians and cars are taken into consideration. We want to understand the goals of the City. What is the one image the City wishes to convey? Is there a secondary image?

Phase 2 will involved system design development. There will be one community forum and one Council presentation (if not more).

Phase 3 (after approval and consensus) involves preparing design documents for bid, specifications for the structure, graphics, maintenance, operations, building requirements, and installation guidelines.

Through all three phases, we outline related costs based on estimates and also shop for market prices. We can start the project within a few weeks after approval.

Mr. Inerfeld commented that the price of the other two bidders were considerably higher. We have \$80,000. With the current, recommended bid, we will have \$40,000 left to implement the first phase of the signage. We put a bid option for interpretive historic signage. We have had discussions about the need to replace the interpretive historic signage. If we do this, it would cut into our construction budget.

Mr. Healy said two-thirds of the cost will be spent on the concept design.

Mr. Inerfeld said if we wanted to go ahead with the historic design concept, we could apply for grants and other funding sources.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked what we get for \$40,000.

Mr. Healy said it would be hard to quantify. The monument signs cost more than way-finding signs. We will need to discuss the priority of the two.

Mr. Inerfeld said the historic signage design would add to the cost, but would be nice to design at the same time. We could potentially get some of the institutions to contribute to the cost of the signs.

Mr. Finn said that when we started this, we were looking at construction to be phased in over several years. We can get the first phase done with this. Everything we cannot get done with \$80,000 will be planned for the future.

Mr. Healy said that the priorities will be set during the first phase of the project.

Ms. Porter confirmed that this firm has done work in Rockville and Silver Spring.

Mr. Healy indicated that work in Rockville was implemented. Silver Spring work dealt with the master plan.

Ms. Porter said that in looking at the schedule, we need community input when we are talking about planning for this and the second point would be related to the design. Do the two community charrettes cover these points?

Mr. Healy replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Williams asked about the extent to which the design incorporates street lights and other things. How does that work into the process?

Mr. Healy responded.

Mr. Williams commented that it has been very unsatisfactory dealing with PEPCO. Can it be considered in the design, so that if there is funding in the future we can consider that?

Mr. Healy said we would start incorporating that concept into the design if desired, based on the funding available. We will do a plan for signs based on existing lampposts, and for custom lamp posts, if the City wants to transition.

Ms. Austin-Lane said we had interest from residents for putting up banners and putting the expense in the budget. When would this be complete for us to be funding it?

Mr. Healy replied that it would be 20 weeks away. We have to have a comprehensive and decisive answer regarding design elements.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked whether they would design the banner system.

Mr. Healy remarked that they will design one banner system (i.e., how they are positioned on the pole). We will design one set of graphics that could be put on the poles. If there are other community groups that would like to put up their own banners, that is a cost and a system in and of itself. They would have to go through the City's approval process. Seasonal banners could be accommodated.

Ms. Austin-Lane said that 20 weeks from the contract finalization there was to be a design plan.

Mr. Inerfeld responded that banners may be better funded in other ways.

Ms. Austin-Lane offered that staff work with the Arts and Humanities Commission (AHC).

Mr. Barry said that the international corridor has been looking for a distinctive way to brand itself. This might be an opportunity to work with the counties.

Ms. Porter commented that this will be on the Council's agenda for next week.

Mr. Inerfeld asked whether there is any guidance for staff.

Ms. Porter suggested that there be discussions with Historic Takoma.

Mr. Williams said he wants to see an appropriate amount of funding to complete the design.

Mr. Seamens suggested that they work with part of the corridor.

6. Old Town Parking Garage.

Mr. Elrich stated he had to leave but raised a number of questions. He wants real world citations with real world experience. He wants to know maintenance costs, operating costs, a discussion of options and costs for metering, a cost for meter enforcement, annual principal and interest on the project, revenue projections based on space-per-day, old town parking need demands versus supply, and Mr. Urciolo's need demand versus supply. After satisfying the existing deficit, why would we talk about leasing space to non-Takoma Park entities? Why enter into long-term Metro space leasing? What is the progress on the agreement of final sale price? (He provided his list of questions to Ms. Daines).

ECD Director Daines said it has been a chicken-and-egg question. It is one that is difficult to pull together and construction numbers, without design work and financial information. We are working to pull this together on multiple tracks. Our primary focus has been on the parking.

Ms. Porter acknowledged everyone on the Council is interested in the financial aspects. There will be many more meetings.

Ms. Daines asserted that more information is needed on both design and finance.

Mr. Inerfeld had a brief Power Point presentation that showed some innovative designs in existing urban areas.

Ms. Daines said these were just ideas to show what kinds of things can be done.

John Urciolo stated that the last time he was before the Council, he asked for funding for an engineer. With the engineer and architect, we have come up with a layout and design. The community has been very receptive to the scale of the garage. Next we have to look at the facade. He showed how the layout works. We talked about leasing lower level spaces, long term, as a revenue source. He would no longer have the reserved spaces in the lot.

Mr. Inerfeld said they can go to some short term minute meters (e.g., 15 minute meters).

Ms. Mizeur said there would need to be adequate enforcement.

Mr. Seamens clarified that there will be 84 spaces in the garage. Will there be any additional in the lot?

Mr. Urciolo replied that if he were to close part of the lot patrons of Taliano's, Mark's, and Subway, could no longer park conveniently. It is depending on the use of the commercial building. If he were to open a full-service restaurant, he would not need the 25 spaces per 1,000 square feet development. If the capacity is 80, we would not have 80 cars. This will be a net gain to the entire area. If he does not put in a restaurant, he could make do with the existing parking.

Ms. Austin-Lane said she agreed that we need financial information related to the additional spaces, better utilization, and better flow. She has seen that the community is generally very supportive and suggested that Historic Takoma be consulted on the design.

Ms. Mizeur asked whether Mr. Urciolo has a willingness to take under advisement the concerns expressed tonight about stormwater and about design.

Mr. Urciolo responded that these things have been discussed with WACO. The engineer talked about the filter system which might be needed. We are concerned about this. Bruce Moyer's and the engineer's report should note the need to improve the drainage into the neighboring yards. This will be addressed. There could be an open staircase--limited to only one story. He proposed no elevator. There is a lot of "great" elements in keeping the project small.

Ms. Porter reminded him that Ms. Tunis was suggesting a pond or a collection facility for the stormwater.

Mr. Urciolo said there was no space for such a feature. He discussed other ideas.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented that a green roof could slow the flow of water--not just filter it.

Ms. Porter mentioned the setback issue, asking whether we deal with that element. She suggested a step back in design process and expressed concern about the neighboring house.

Mr. Inerfeld suggested that landscaping can help soften that concern.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked if we have talked with Carlton and explored connecting this lot.

Ms. Porter referred to the portico over the entrance. It could make it look like the porch on the house. She suggested they think about these kinds of ideas. A question was raised about what retail might fit in the garage.

Mr. Urciolo suggested a shoe repair shop could operate in a very small space.

Mr. Seamens asked that they think about a 4th level, and of expanding parking under the new

commercial structure.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked if have we explored the entrance, making it a pedestrian-only access (on Carroll Avenue). This could enhance safety and create a more pervious surface.

Ms. Porter also expressed concern about pedestrian safety issues.

Ms. Austin-Lane said it was critical to have the DC government's buy-in. She reminded them to contact District Councilmember Adrian Fenty.

Mr. Seamens inquired about the ideas for the commercial building.

Mr. Urciolo responded that they have plans for two storefronts on Laurel--a restaurant on the second story and a community theater in the basement for minimal rental of community theater/dance rooms. There could be live or video presentations.

Mr. Seamens asked how this will effect parking capacity.

Mr. Urciolo remarked that there are 8 spaces allocated to the theater. He summarized the major issues at hand: 1) stormwater; 2) facade; 3) parking garage; and 4) commercial building. He said they will be working on the revenue numbers.

Ms. Porter asked them to go to the community with the design.

Mr. Urciolo confirmed that they will meet with them, send sketches to various groups, and let them comment.

Ms. Porter requested that he get community input before coming back to the Council.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned at 11:53 p.m. for the evening.